

ABSTRACT: 2019 ELAM Institutional Action Project

Project Title: Identification of Key Factors That Impact Wellness and Burnout in Female Faculty

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Collaborators/Mentors: Douglas Ziedonis, MD, University of California at San Diego

Topic Category: Administration

Background, Significance of the Project: Increasing an understanding of the key factors that influence wellness, burnout, and engagement of practicing physicians is now recognized as important in the medical community in order to better address the high rates of burnout and depression. Specifically, physicians have the highest rate of suicide and efforts to improve personal wellness and make needed system change have risen to national attention in many medical specialties, including my specialty of Pathology. There are perceived gender differences in the medical work setting; however, less is known regarding the potential gender-specific differences in wellness and burnout, which may lead to a better understanding on how to develop targeted interventions for female physician faculty.

Purpose/Objectives: UC San Diego has administered several physician engagement surveys (Press Ganey) with overall low engagement and alignment score findings, although the data has not been previously analyzed in a gender-specific manner nor related to wellness and burnout. Our objective is to identify wellness, engagement, and burnout differences between male and female faculty to better understand key factors that could lead to developing new targeted interventions at the personal and system level.

Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy: (1) We will use existing data obtained through the *2018 UC San Diego Health – Physician Engagement Survey* that has been benchmarked against the national physician average for engagement scores in order to determine if quantitative differences between male and female faculty engagement scores exist. (2) We will then perform gender-specific focus groups in the Department of Pathology to identify factors that negatively impact wellness and enhance burnout among practicing male and female physicians in this specialty. (3) Finally, we will review the Pathology-specific literature to identify potential commonalities with focus group data.

Outcomes/Results: The *2018 UC San Diego Health – Physician Engagement Survey* showed a consistently lower rate of engagement amongst female faculty members as compared to male faculty members (score 2.86 female vs. 2.97 male; scale 1-5). In both male and female faculty groups, faculty engagement increased with increasing age. Male and female focus group data was compared. Female faculty gave highly favorable responses to engagement questions, whereas male faculty gave less favorable responses to engagement. When asked about specific stressors, both male and female faculty ranked workload as the greatest stressor, although for female faculty the stressor related to negative impact on resident teaching and workday flexibility whereas for male faculty this related to feeling rushed and missing deadlines. Additional major stressors for female faculty included limited support staff, challenges in communication channels and work day disruptions. Additional major stressors for male faculty included limited support staff, dual hospital-medical school governance and finance structure, and limited transparency and self-governance.

Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact: There are unique stressors that negative impact wellness between male and female faculty. Although “workload” has been identified in the Pathology literature as a major negative stressor for faculty, it is clear that more detailed discussion using focus group approaches identified different ways in which this factor impacts male and female faculty. Ongoing discussion using gender-specific approaches may provide additional insights into areas for targeted intervention for male and female faculty. Changes will need to occur for the system, not just the individual physician becoming more resilient.



Identification of Key Factors That Impact Wellness and Burnout in Female Faculty

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Background, Significance of the Project

Increasing awareness of wellness and burnout of practicing physicians has been a recent prominent area of discussion in the medical literature. Specifically, medical professionals have one of the highest rates of suicide and efforts to improve wellness and reduce burnout have risen to national attention in many medical specialties, including my specialty of Pathology. However, less is known regarding gender-specific differences in wellness and burnout, which may have a significant impact on the development of targeted interventions for faculty physicians.

Purpose/Objectives

We have undertaken several physician engagement surveys at UC San Diego, although a gender-specific survey related to wellness and burnout has not been performed. In order to determine if such differences between male and female faculty exist, and to identify what these factors are., we will:

- (1) Determine if physician satisfaction scores differ by gender using existing data obtained through institution-wide survey tools;
- (2) Undertake gender-specific focus group discussions in the Department of Pathology to identify major areas of stress and dissatisfaction in male and female faculty clinicians;
- (3) Compare results to existing literature to identify areas of dissatisfaction that may be optimal for intervention in the male and female faculty population.

Methods/Approach

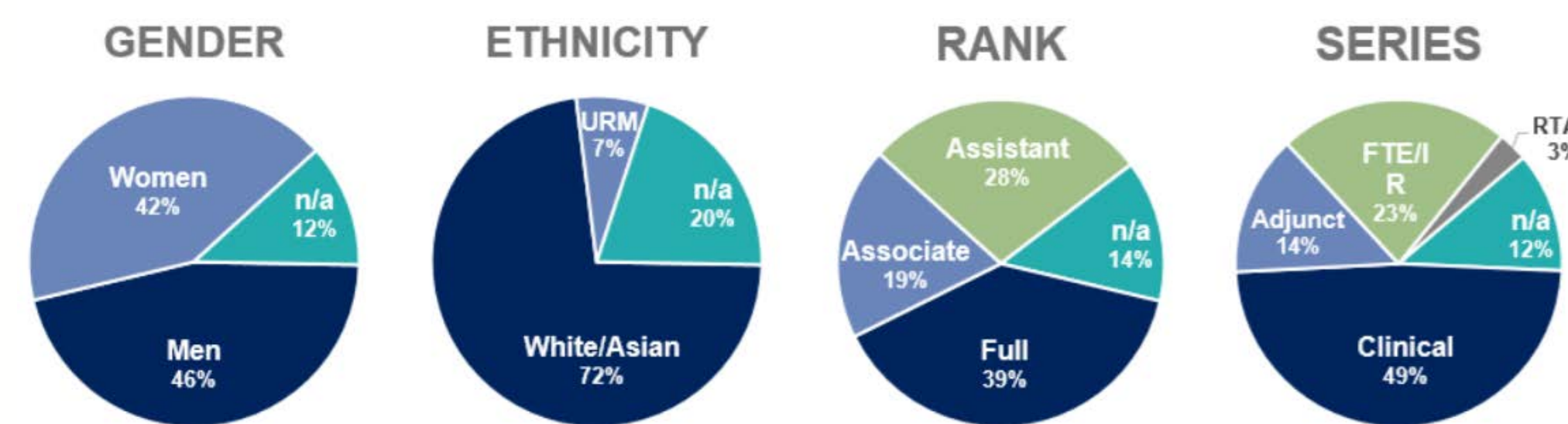
- Use existing data obtained through the 2011 and 2015 UC San Diego Health – Faculty Climate Survey benchmarked against AAMC data
 - Assesses morale, resources, environment and behavior
 - Prepopulated questions
- Perform gender-specific focus groups in the Department of Pathology to identify factors that negatively impact wellness and enhance burnout among practicing male and female physicians in this specialty
- Review the Pathology-specific literature to identify potential commonalities with focus group data



Presented at the 2019 ELAM® Leaders Forum

Outcomes/Results

Faculty Climate Survey Demographics 2015:



Faculty Satisfaction Relative to AAMC:

	UCSD	AAMC
Would choose to work here again	72%	70%
In 5 years, I expect to be working here	65%	71%
In 5 years, I expect to be in academic medicine	81%	67%

Areas in Which Female Faculty Significantly Differed From Male Faculty in Response:

Physical safety on campus, including offices and parking structures
Opportunities to receive mentoring
Perception of being able to influence the academic direction of a unit
Transparency around compensation processes
Subjected to multiple instances of anger, intimidation, inappropriate behavior
Provided relevant information regarding space, salary and resources

Pathology-Specific Focus Group Observations:

- Focus group topic was not disclosed prior to the meeting, leading to both curiosity and anxiety regarding the topic
- Upon discussion of the topic “Wellness, Burnout and Stressors”, female faculty tended to lead the discussion more frequently, whereas male faculty primarily responded to questions
- Senior female faculty were more likely to provide mentor advice to junior female faculty as compared to the male cohort
- The focus group for female faculty lasted twice as long as that for male faculty

Outcomes/Results

Female versus Male Focus Group “Stressors”:

Major Stressor	Female Faculty	Male Faculty
#1	Workload - Limits teaching time and flexibility of schedule	Workload - Contributes to sense of feeling rushed and turnaround time stress
#2	Lack of adequate support staff	Lack of adequate support staff
#3	Difficulty in communication channels	Dual hospital-SOM administrative and finance structure
#4	Disruptions during the work day	Limited transparency and self-governance at the Departmental level
Additional Targeted Questions	Female Faculty	Male Faculty
Is workday flexibility important?	Yes – but important to have shared time together	Yes – but anticipated workload rather than shared time important
Is allowing children at work helpful?	Yes – very important given limited options	Doesn't matter – “more important for moms”
Are career opportunities adequate?	No – need more leadership opportunities, feel men are promoted faster	Yes – no issues
What are thoughts on interpersonal dynamics?	Need more social activity, improved communication channels	Need more respect from the hospital, transparency from Department

Summary/Conclusion

- Gender-specific information is often not collected in survey tools
- Overall faculty climate scores may easily miss underlying gender-specific issues
- Population-wide gender-specific concerns may not be applicable in individual Departments or Divisions
- Similar “stressors” may be due to different underlying real or perceived concerns that differ by gender
- Pathology literature identifies “workload” as a major stressor, although focus group data suggest the downstream impact is more important and differs by gender